

Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce
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Press Release

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Today, Lester Spell, Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce, kicked off a statewide program designed to promote the purchase of American meat by the consuming public. In making the announcement at Brookshire's in North Jackson, Spell said, "Brookshire's is in the forefront of this effort in Mississippi. They promote only American beef. They are to be commended."

Joining Lester Spell at the Brookshire's Grocery at the corner of Beasley and Ridgewood Roads were Sammy Blossom, Executive Vice-President of Mississippi Cattlemen's Association, and Paul Ford, Area Supervisor for Brookshire's Meat Division. In stating that Brookshire's would promote All-American Beef, Ford stated, "Brookshire's is proud to be able to support local producers and is especially proud to buy domestic beef products. We feel more confident with the sale of USA beef because it is of high quality and is a safer product."

In making the announcement, Spell emphasized the importance of the message in Senate Bill 2367, passed by the Mississippi Legislature during the 2002 Regular Session. "The Mississippi Legislature felt that it was important that the Mississippi consumer have a choice as to the country of origin of the meat that he or she consumes," Spell stated. "This legislation, while it does not apply to meat in processed foods, applies to the bulk of the meat that we traditionally buy. As Commissioner of Agriculture of Mississippi, I ask all Mississippians to join me in promoting Mississippi agriculture and our American beef."

Sammy Blossom of Mississippi Cattlemen's thinks it is extremely important that consumers have a choice of buying American beef when they go to the meat case. Blossom stated, "As many of us find when grocery shopping, many products are not from the United States. In some instances, health and safety factors are a major concern and we have found this particularly true in meat products."

In preparing for implementation of the legislation, the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce will enforce the law to its fullest extent by inspecting the individual stores around the state. The inspectors will check for displays of beef labeling signs in the area in which the meat is sold or on the meat itself for the country of origin, identifying it as a “product of ... (whatever country).” Violation of the legislation will subject the store to a civil penalty of up to \$500.00, with each day of violation considered a separate offence. The law does not apply to restaurants or similar retail establishments in which the product is sold for consumption on the premises.